

SUMMER DAYS IN THE AMERICAN SECTORS



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into their gas masks and rolling in the dirt to muss up their uniforms a bit. They have come up here into the jaws of death and the only thing they're afraid of is that some one will call them rookies."

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There is a case on record of one regiment which went three weeks on 12 boxes of matches. When these were gone some bold soldier discovered a way of knocking the ball out of a cartridge, pouring out the powder and lighting it. This lasted until some of the officers began to wonder where their ammunition was going.

Then someone found that a tent rope, ignited at one end, would smolder for hours. This worked until the supply sergeants found out about it.

Finally, a set of watches was arranged, and men were appointed whose duty it was to keep a light going for a certain number of hours. Everybody in the regiment is smoking without difficulty now, though there has been only that one carefully nourished light for a week.

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Following a night skirmish, a Yank appeared at a field dressing station. "Got a bullet in the leg," he declared. "Where?" asked the doctor.

"That's the funny thing about it," said the soldier. "I didn't feel it. I can't find it, and I walked all the way here, but my leg is all blood from the hip down."

"Come into the light," commanded the doctor.

Investigation disclosed a punctured—and empty—cannon. The water had seeped down the soldier's breeches, and he had decided that it was blood.

A battery of French seventy-fives, pressed to its maximum, can put over an astonishing number of shells. On one occasion such a battery, manned by Americans, fired steadily into a German position for half an hour. When it subsided the Infantry advanced and captured a German officer and four soldiers, all that were left of the German force.

The German officer was questioned by an intelligence officer. At the conclusion, he said:

"If it isn't asking too much, before you take me back, I'd like to see that three-hill machine gun you fellows have got."

He was writing home. "You ask me," he said, "to tell you what kind of a noise a shell makes as it comes through the air. Many have tried to describe it and couldn't. But if you really want to know, the noise a shell makes is exactly like either of two things. One is the noise of the shell that came along just ahead of it, and the other is the noise of the shell that comes along just after it."

When the civil population left Xville, it took along with it everything it could. But it could not take its potted geraniums. The potted geraniums, how-

ever, still bloom in the red arbor of June. The Yanks see to that. Even dignified and not-to-be-trifled-with M.P.'s have been surreptitiously caught watering them.

They were loading up an ambulance for the long ride back from the field hospital. The patients were being classified into the customary groups of litter and sitting-down cases.

"How about you?" they asked a doughboy who had some shrapnel in his hip. "Can you walk?"

"Sure," he answered. "How far is it?"

"About 40 kilometers," he scratched his head as though he hated to be shown up. So they explained that they expected him to walk only as far as the ambulance.

The Y.M.C.A. man in the field frequently is the banker for his unit. One was standing alone at the side of a road five or six kilometers behind the lines. All his pockets were obviously overtaxed, and his coat was bulging so that only the lowermost and topmost buttons could connect with their corresponding buttonholes.

"It's money," he explained. "Money and watches. I've got 17 watches and 90,000 francs. The boys got paid before they went in and most of them turned it over to me. I was going up with the battalion, but they asked me to stay behind and watch their valuables."

Y.M. men also keep an emergency fund for change. There is only one thing that a soldier needs change for: 10 miles from the nearest store.

"Lemme have 20 francs in silver, please," requests one private.

"Can you give a 10 franc note for this chicken feed?" asks another.

"Sure," says the Y.M. man. "How's the back running?"

"Tough, ain't it?" he commented, as they lifted him into the ambulance.

"Oh, you're all right," said the corpsman cheerfully. "Just a couple of hunkers of shrapnel in a couple of places where a couple of hunkers of shrapnel can't do any harm."

"That ain't what's worrying me," explained the doughboy. "But here I am going back to a base hospital wounded, and the only Germans I've seen since I came to France were three prisoners."

They call them the Harrisones. There are six of them—the mother and five children, ranging from ten down to two.

They still cling to the little farmhouse where the children were born, even though the Hun tide has swept to within less than four kilometers of their home. Guns boom about them all day; Boche planes circle overhead and are driven back; everyone around town wears steel shoes—everyone but the Harrisones.

It would probably be lonesome for them if the Yanks weren't there. And it would be lonesome for the Yanks if the Harrisones weren't there.

An Air Service major who hasn't yet earned his first service chevrons—it isn't his fault—has won two wound stripes to make up for it. He took gas for one and had a Boche bullet hit him in the air for the other. Incidentally, he had enlisted as a private, and to gain the double wings had to have the age limit raised. He is 40 years old, a Spanish war veteran, with a woman brought back from the Philippines as a trophy and a big game hunter.

To an American engineer sergeant serving with the British belongs the distinction of having been wounded on each of three successive days—within a little more than 24 hours, in fact.

He was injured one night at 11:58, shrapnel pierced the ambulance in which he was being carried back and left him another memento.

At last he reached the hospital. Soon after the following midnight the hospital was bombed. The engineer sergeant became a three-star, three-stripe casualty.

The Huns then gave him up as hopeless. At any rate, they haven't followed him any further.

Except on the night after pay-day, the life of an M.P. in the S.O.S. is pretty soft. When he has directed two newly arrived officers to the mairie, told another where he can get a good beef-steak and explained to a fourth that "for on consolate to Batten" does not mean "Here you can confer with a boot-maker," he cuts it a day's work.

It is different up front. The M.P. on a shelled cross-road leads no life of idleness. He must be on his toes all the time, for he knows that if he misdirects

a passing automobile by so much as a single turning, that car is likely to drive into "Germany" and the A.E.F. be minus a perfectly good colonel or something. He knows, too, that the woods may be full of spies and that it is up to him to make the capture.

He serves four hours on and eight hours off, but there is no rest in the eight hours with the shells whistling overhead and occasionally crashing in on the pig-pen he had picked for his bed and begun to regard as home.

A report that a quite unidentifiable man, garbed as an American Lieutenant-colonel, was prowling through the territory south of Belleau Woods the other day, put every M.P. on his mettle and made utterly miserable the life of every bona-fide Lieutenant-colonel who ventured to put his nose out of his quarters during the next few days.

In no time the rumor was current throughout the sector that one M.P. had tracked the villain and brought him in, that the villain aforesaid had turned out

to be a spy of international fame, and that the lucky captor would be decorated and rewarded with a six months' furlough on Broadway.

Nowhere in the A.E.F. is the sense of rumor so keen as at the front, and few of the senior divisions have not vibrated in response to the crazy report that they were all going to be ordered to America for exhibition purposes.

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